



Memorandum

TO: Making Government Work Better
Committee

FROM: Sara L. Hensley

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: February 4, 2004

Approved

Date

**SUBJECT: FOLLOW-UP REPORT TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT
CENTER (NDC) AUDIT**

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the follow-up report on the Neighborhood Development Center Audit.

BACKGROUND

An audit of the Neighborhood Development Center (a function of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services) was completed by the City Auditor's office in the summer of 2003. As a result, six key recommendations were made:

1. Resolve Property Owners' and Tenant Training program ownership, authority, funding, and management responsibility issues and prepare a formal Program workplan with specific goals and objectives;
2. Develop a comprehensive budget for the Project Blossom Program, a formal Project Blossom workplan for each Project Blossom site, and establish guidelines and better supervisory review;
3. Require Project Blossom staff to document and report to PRNS management how they spend their time on Project Blossom activities;
4. Reconfigure and consolidate the Neighborhood Academy;
5. Develop and implement specific CAP Grant criteria including usage, evaluation, and follow-up guidelines for determining how much to award for each specific grant purpose,

- and requiring applicants to provide detailed descriptions of specific locations where proposed projects will take place and expected timeframes for project completion;
6. Make full use of the grant management oversight clause in its agreement with the Community Foundation (Foundation) of Silicon Valley.

The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the actions taken to implement the audit recommendations.

RESPONSES TO AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1 – Resolve Property Owners’ and Tenant Training program ownership, authority, funding, and management responsibility issues and prepare a formal Program workplan with specific goals and objectives

Staff from PRNS, Code Enforcement and Housing met to discuss this recommendation. It was agreed that the Housing Department has sufficient resources to manage all aspects of the tenant training program and will provide up to 15 training opportunities during FY 2003-04. The program will remain on the NDC’s list of community training programs for information and referral purposes; however, no direct NDC staff support will be provided to the program.

With respect to the Property Owner’s Training program, it was agreed that both the NDC and Code Enforcement have complementary roles and responsibilities. The NDC, as a central repository of community resource information, can more effectively and efficiently manage the logistical and outreach aspects of the program. The NDC maintains a database of property owners and neighborhood associations for neighborhood organizing purposes and as such, can easily facilitate recruitment activities for the property owners’ training. In addition, consistent with its mission to help organize and support neighborhoods, the NDC is designed to be a central clearinghouse house of information and technical assistance with respect to community organizing. In light of these capabilities, it was agreed that the most efficient manner in which to provide logistical and administrative support to the program would be through the NDC. This support, however, would be limited to the management of program registration, making facility arrangements and providing technical assistance to property owners interested in starting a new association. Actual development of the training curriculum, instruction and on-going support for the associations will be provide by Code Enforcement. Three training series will be conducted in FY2003-04.

Recommendation #2 – Develop a comprehensive budget for the Project Blossom Program, a formal Project Blossom workplan for each Project Blossom site, and establish guidelines and better supervisory review.

It is recommended that no new Project Blossom areas be selected at this time due to staff vacancies and anticipated reductions. However, Code Enforcement will continue to attend 6 property owner meetings per month and PRNS will attend 2 meetings per month to maintain communication and provide information and resources as necessary to former Project

Blossom sites. The Project Blossom manual has been established for use at a future time when budget allows.

A major component of Project Blossom is organizing property owners and assisting them in the establishment of a Property Owner's Association. As mentioned above, PRNS will continue to provide assistance to property owners who desire to start an association in their area on an as requested basis.

Given this neighborhood organizing activity, the NDC has worked diligently to improve their alignment with the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative. To that end, given the current budget situation and in response to recommendations received via customer surveys and focus groups, it is recommended that the Project Blossom function be integrated into a more comprehensive Neighborhood Organizing function within the Neighborhood Development Center rather than continue as a stand alone function. It is proposed that the core services offered by the Neighborhood Development Center become focused on two areas: Neighborhood Training and Neighborhood Development Services. This will facilitate increased flexibility to shift staff resources between the neighborhood training function and the neighborhood organizing function. Furthermore, we recommend the change of name from Project Blossom to Neighborhood Development Services.

Recommendation #3: Require Project Blossom staff to document and report to PRNS management how they spend their time on Project Blossom activities.

In order to manage staff time, project updates are given each week during staff meetings with the NDC Community Services Supervisor. In addition, each staff members is responsible for submitting a monthly report. Finally, beginning February 3, 2004, staff will be responsible for utilizing a new database to track service calls.

Enclosed as Attachment A is a copy of the draft workplan that has been developed as a guide for the next six months activities.

At the time of the audit, Project Blossom staff consisted of 1 Community Coordinator (CC), 1 B-Benefit Community Activity Worker (CAW), and 1 D-benefit Community Activity worker (CAW), and some pool hours. The current staff is 1 Recreation Specialist, 1 B-Benefit CAW and 1 D-Benefit CAW.

Recommendation #4: Reconfigure and consolidate the Neighborhood Academy

The Neighborhood Academy focuses on neighborhood organizing, recruiting volunteers, managing neighborhood projects and identifying and creating partnerships with resources in and around their neighborhood. An experiential learning component has also been incorporated that enables participants to implement a neighborhood project while a member of the Academy. Classes are no longer taught by consultants, but are taught by City staff, past Neighborhood Academy participants, and volunteers from community-based organizations. The classes are offered in English and in Spanish twice a year. During the first set of classes with the revised curriculum, Unit I graduated 12 participants, Unit II

graduated 16 participants, and Unit III graduated 57 participants, with many more having attended one or more of the classes.

The revised curriculum for the Neighborhood Academy classes is as follows:

Class	Unit I	Unit II	Unit III
1	"Introduction to Neighborhood Organizing"	Volunteer Recruitment	Selecting a Project and Getting Started
2	"The Power of Neighborhood Associations and Coalitions"	Partnerships with Neighborhood Schools, Community Organizations and Community Businesses	Publicity and Marketing – How to Promote Your Project
3	Grant Development Management	City and County Resources	Neighborhood Organizing in Action – Tips and Resources
4	"Plan a Project and Create a Timeline"	Neighborhood Safety Resources	Celebrating Your Organizations Successes!

In addition to the 12 session series, the NDC will be hosting "Mini-Academies" throughout the year at satellite locations. Upon request, staff of the NDC will go out to the neighborhood groups and coordinate a Mini Academy based on their training needs. The **Leadership Development Training** Manual offers 35 classes in the area of leadership development and neighborhood organizing. Since time does not allow everyone to commit to a series of trainings, these one-time classes offers a more in-depth training experience for those who have already attended the Neighborhood Academy or have specific training needs. The NDC is also leading the Youth Leadership Training Program for the Youth Commissioners. A kick-off training was held on January 10, 2004.

Enclosed as Attachments B and C are rosters of the past two Academy sessions. As these rosters illustrate, there has been a significant increase in participation both from within SNI areas as well as non-SNI areas. By working with SNI partners and outside groups such as non-profits and school groups, the NDC has been able to improve its outreach efforts. The NDC has also initiated a pro-active outreach strategy to improve community awareness of its services. A survey was distributed to neighborhood associations, Neighborhood Advisory Committee, the Project Area Committee, staff, and Council Assistants to obtain feedback on service improvements. In addition, focus groups were conducted in both English and in Spanish. Finally, NDC staff has started going out into the community to neighborhood meetings to provide an overview of services. Enclosed as Attachment D is a schedule of recently completed and soon to be held community presentations.

Recommendation #5: Develop and implement specific CAP Grant criteria including usage, evaluation, and follow-up guidelines for determining how much to award for each specific grant purpose, and requiring applicants to provide detailed descriptions of specific locations where proposed projects will take place and expected timeframes for project completion.

Administration of the CAP Grant program has been transferred to the PRNS Grants Unit. A review of the CAP Grant guidelines has been conducted to clarify guidelines and create more in-depth evaluation criteria. Additional recommendations have been developed regarding the award of funds to ensure greater consistency and provide for a follow-up process. The proposed revisions have been drafted and are currently under review by the PRNS Director. It is anticipated that final revisions will be submitted for formal approval within the next 60 days prior to the distribution of Cycle 18 applications.

Recommendation #6: Make full use of the grant management oversight clause in its agreement with the Community Foundation (Foundation) of Silicon Valley.

PRNS has met with Community Foundation of Silicon Valley and the roles of the Foundation and PRNS in the management of the CAP Grants has been clarified.

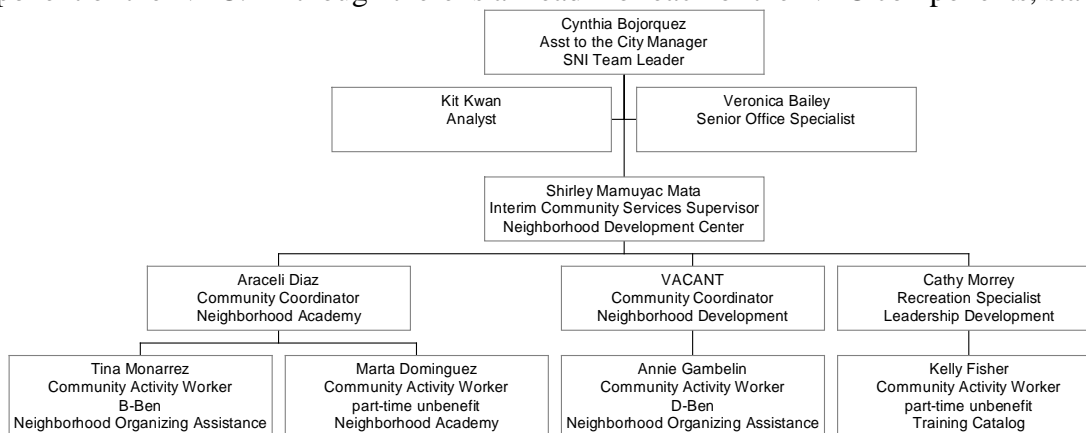
Other NDC activities of Note

New Location:

The Neighborhood Development Center has moved from its location at 105 N Bascom Ave, Suite 105 to 43 East Gish Road, Suite 100. This move has resulted in operational (lower lease cost) and programmatic efficiencies. In our new location, we have been able to increase the number of computers available in the computer lab by partnering with Youth Employment and we are co-located with Community Services staff that has increased our interaction and provided for better alignment of services. Negotiations are also underway to utilize the Mexican Heritage Plaza as a possible satellite site.

Staff Changes:

Due to budget cuts and the departure of some NDC staff, the NDC has gone through some major staff changes. To better align our services and continue to provide quality customer service despite the reduction in the number of staff, all NDC staff have been cross-trained in each component of the NDC. Although there is a “lead” for each of the NDC components, staff



members work on projects as a team and are more informed of all aspects of NDC and are better prepared to answer any customer questions. The following chart illustrates the new organizational structure of the NDC.

Technological and Information Resources

The NDC offers a variety of technological and information resources at no charge to neighborhood associations. Technical Resources include: Internet ready computers, printers, scanners, copy machines, typewriters, fax services, and software including Spanish translator. We also provide information resources including referrals to the City's Call Center, other government and community-based organizations and a resource library to assist in community organizing. In February 2004, we will be introducing the NDC's newsletter "Community Connections".

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the NDC continues to move forward in implementing the audit recommendations. We will continue to improve our service and service delivery once the results of the surveys and focus groups are completed. Our goal is to improve the services we offer to make this a Neighborhood Development Center that our customers view as a valuable training center and neighborhood organizing resource.

SARA L. HENSLEY
Director, Parks, Recreation and
Neighborhood Services

Attachment A – Project Blossom Workplan
Attachment B – Academy Roster
Attachment C – Academy Roster
Attachment D – Schedule of Community Presentations